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**County Celebrates Public Health Week**

Today kicked off the annual National Public Health Week celebration in San Bernardino County. Margaret Beed, M.D., Health Officer with the San Bernardino County Department of Public Health presented a County Health Status Report at the Board of Supervisor’s meeting.

Beed noted improvements in the adequacy of prenatal care, and a reduction in infant deaths, births to teenage mothers, and deaths from all cancers. Beed said “a 12 percent drop in teen girls having babies was based on historic highs in the past, but current local and national data indicate the numbers are creeping up again. We have to maintain vigilance by continuing education and advocacy among adolescents to discourage unwanted pregnancies.”

Outreach to mothers having high risk babies has contributed to fewer infant deaths. “Collaboration with community organizations and other County Departments, like Behavioral Health, have heightened awareness of the importance of prenatal care,” stated Beed. As an example, efforts to provide education and treatment referral to women abusing alcohol, other drugs, and tobacco have given more babies a healthier start in life.

Beed pointed out that “on the other hand, we have our work cut out for us to reduce chronic illnesses. It’s alarming that 42 percent of all deaths in the County are due to obesity-related causes.” Obesity is a major risk factor in the incidence of heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes. There is a higher rate of obesity in San Bernardino County in comparison to the state of California. Overweight and obese adults consist of 65 percent of the County’s population. Nationally, the prevalence of overweight and obesity has increased sharply for both adults and children.

Another surprising finding was that 74 percent of San Bernardino County 5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> graders failed to meet standards in aerobic capacity, body composition, abdominal

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strength, trunk extensors strength, upper body strength and flexibility compared to 71 percent of students in California. (California Department of Education, 2006-2007)

“In San Bernardino County, there are six times more unhealthy food retail outlets as healthy, the worst in the state!” emphasized Beed. The cities of Chino, Fontana and Ontario are working with the Department of Public Health’s Healthy Communities Project, to identify local activities that promote a healthier environment for residents. Some of the projects include a city health clinic and school partnerships in Chino, a city/non-profit partnership and mentoring campaign in Ontario, and a Health and Wellness Center and walking clubs in Fontana. The cities of Rancho Cucamonga, Redlands and Rialto are planning to join the Project later this year.

Public Health’s Nutrition program coordinates a variety of activities such as encouraging healthy eating for seniors, helping restaurant owners create healthier menu choices, planning a community garden, developing a Legacy Cookbook, offering FAME dance and Move More Seniors classes, and distributing a Business Worksite Wellness Toolkit.

Promoting regular physical activity, healthy eating habits, and creating an environment that supports these behaviors are essential to addressing the problem of obesity and obesity related diseases. Beed emphasized that “educating key people in the community about the connections between diet and diseases will help support and promote policies that can make a positive impact on health status. By highlighting these links, people can make choices and lead lifestyles that are healthy for them, their families, and their communities.”

For more information about the Healthy Communities Project, or nutrition and physical activities, contact the San Bernardino County Department of Public Health at (800) 782-4264. You can also visit the website at [www.sbcounty.gov/dph](http://www.sbcounty.gov/dph).

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